To: Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation, Inc.
From: Robert A. Wagner, Team Leader
Date: September 18, 2009
Re: Full-Compliance on-Site Assessment Report
Office of Inspector General, Florida Department of Children & Families
Standards Manual Edition: 1.0

A. Date of On-Site Assessment: August 6, 2009

Key Agency Personnel:
Chief Executive Officer: Inspector General Sheryl Steckler
Accreditation Manager: Inspector General Sheryl Steckler
Accreditation Team Member(s): Ms. Jennifer Guillermo

B. Assessment Team:

Team Leader: Robert A. Wagner (RAW)
Title: Lieutenant
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Team Member (Tampa Office): Clyde Hedrick
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Team Member (Orlando Office): Daric Harvey (DH)
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Team Member (Ft. Lauderdale): Mike Cochran
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C. Standards Summary Tally:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CFA Compliance Tally</th>
<th>Number of Standards Not Applicable (By Function)</th>
<th>Number of Standards Waived</th>
<th>Number of Applicable Standards In Compliance</th>
<th>Percent of Applicable Standards In Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Standards</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
D. Agency Profile:

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) holds three core tenets as its mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency. The Core Values of the agency include quality, integrity, and accountability. To carry out its responsibilities, DCF manages a 2.8 billion dollar budget and employs 13,255 staff members. In order to best meet its mission and follow its values, DCF maintains its own Office of the Inspector General, headed by Inspector General Sheryl Steckler.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) for DCF has an annual budget of 3.7 million and a staff of 54 spread over four offices throughout the state of Florida. The main office is in Tallahassee with branch offices in Orlando, Tampa, and Ft. Lauderdale. There are three separate units within the OIG: Audit, Appeal Hearings, and Investigations. It is the Investigations Unit that was the focus of this accreditation process.

The Investigative Unit is responsible for receiving complaints and coordinating all activities of DCF as required by Florida Statutes 112.3187 – 112.31895, also known as the Whistle-Blower’s Act. It is also responsible for receiving and considering complaints which do not meet the criteria for an investigation under the Whistle-Blower’s Act and conducting, supervising, or coordinating such inquiries, investigations, or reviews as the Inspector General (IG) deems appropriate. Once investigations are complete, the OIG submits in a timely fashion final reports on investigations conducted by the IG to the head of DCF. To maintain transparency, all closed investigations are available to the public.

The OIG plays a significant role in the accountability arena, even more so with a Secretary who is totally committed to accountability, as well as the prevention of waste, fraud, and abuse in state government. Public accountability requires demonstrating to taxpayers that their resources are safeguarded and spent according to legal mandates and limitations, that their programs operate economically and efficiently, and more importantly, that the taxpayers’ desired results are obtained. Moreover, the Secretary’s mandate to every employee is that strict adherence to the leadership traits, as promoted by the Department’s Leadership Program, is vital to the sustained maintenance of accountability in this agency.

Since perceptions of the OIG can be as damaging as reality, the professional ethics and personal behavior of the OIG staff are issues of great significance. Every employee must maintain unassailably high moral standards, faithful obedience to the law, a strict avoidance of even the appearance of unethical behavior, and an unrelenting self-discipline for independent and objective thoughts and work habits that emulate integrity in every sense of the word.

E. On-Site Summary:

Central Tallahassee Office

On August 6, 2009, at 0800 hours, the primary assessment team arrived at the OIG’s main office in Tallahassee to conduct a one-day assessment. Accreditation Assistant Jennifer Guillermo greeted the team and escorted them into the building to meet Inspector General Sheryl Steckler. IG Steckler is
also the accreditation manager. Once the team was settled into its work area an entrance interview was conducted, followed by a tour of the Investigative Unit. Everyone encountered was enthusiastic and excited about the accreditation process. This was very refreshing given that it is not uncommon for the rank-and-file of an agency to exhibit less enthusiasm about accreditation than the head of the agency and the accreditation manager.

The assessment consisted mostly of file review and interviews as necessary. The facilities provided to the team were superb for completing the required tasks. Throughout the day the team members assigned to the field offices made contact with the team leader. Preliminary findings were discussed with the team leader allowing him to talk about the entire assessment of the OIG during the exit interview.

The exit interview was conducted in the afternoon with the Inspector General Sheryl Steckler, Accreditation Assistant Jennifer Guillermo, and Chief of Investigations Keith Parks. A summary of observations was given to the accreditation team. The assessment was concluded in a single day.

**Orlando Field Office**

On August 6, 2009, at 1000 hours, Sergeant Daric Harvey met with Investigations Supervisor Flora Tran of the OIG at the Orlando Field Office. She was very helpful and professional. She provided responses for a majority of the interview standards. Sergeant Harvey also spoke with the following members: Investigator Oscar Restrepo, Investigator Dave Guerdan, and Investigator Nicole Laporte.

The assessment lasted for a few hours and Sergeant Harvey confirmed compliance with the appropriate standards. It was noted that the evidence security was less than what would be expected at a law enforcement agency, but was appropriate given the function and operations of the IG office.

All members of this office demonstrated an excellent working knowledge of the accreditation process and full understanding of the requirements necessary for compliance with this initial accreditation.

**Tampa Field Office**

On August 6, 2009, Inspector Clyde Hedrick visited the Tampa Field Office. The offices of the Inspector General investigators are located within the overall office confines of the Department of Children and Family Services. Inspector Hedrick was met at the reception area by Investigations Supervisor Nate Travis. Supervisor Travis conducted a brief escort of the facilities contiguous with IG’s offices for orientation purposes. A brief escort of the three offices occupied by the IG investigators was immediately followed by introductions and an explanation of the assessment process. Investigations Supervisor Travis introduced Investigator Richard Bettker and Investigator Robert Holland with a brief background of each investigator.

Each of the 38 applicable standards was reviewed, observed, discussed and proofs requested/provided specific to the requirements of the standards with all three members of this office. The satellite office provided examples of proofs through data systems employed by the IG and through local record keeping, historical emails and electronic files common to the IG functions.
All three members of this office demonstrated an excellent working knowledge of the accreditation process and full understanding of the requirements necessary for compliance with this initial accreditation.

**Ft. Lauderdale Field Office**
On August 6, 2009, Deputy Chief Mike Cochran visited the Ft. Lauderdale Field Office and made contact with Investigations Supervisor Cinda Crum. Supervisor Crum introduced Deputy Chief Cochran to both of the investigators for the office, Investigator Andrew Gardner and Investigator Richard Smith.

All applicable standards under review were in compliance. All employees were found to be extremely well versed in their job roles and are veteran investigators. Of note was their computer system that maintains their case files and training records. This network based system allows the office to seamlessly communicate with the other field offices as well as the headquarters in Tallahassee. This software was demonstrated and it was evident that this software is used every day and that it was designed to help assure that the office complies with the accreditation standards.

The only issue that this assessor observed that may be an issue was on evidence storage. The standards for this accreditation type do not have a glossary and the assessor did not believe that the rigorous law enforcement evidence standards definition would be applicable.

**F. Standards Noncompliance Discussion:** None.

**G. Corrective Action Discussion:**

4.08  (Assigned Assessor: DC)

A directive requires investigative staff members to comply with constitutional, statutory and employee union/bargaining unit requirements when conducting investigations.

Problem: Directive number 4-07 stated that, “If a subject or witness of an Office of Inspector General investigation is a member of a Union/Collective Bargaining Unit, the Union/Collective Bargaining Employee Notification will be completed prior to any investigative activity.” This does not match the practice. In fact, investigations may be nearly completed, with the exception of interviewing the union/collective bargaining employee, prior to the affected employee being notified of the investigation. This policy does not affect most DCF employees, but there are times where it would be possible that practice does not match policy.

Fix: The directive was changed to more accurately reflect practice. That is, the policy follows the 1975 Supreme Court decision, NLRB v. J. Weingarten, Inc., and places the responsibility on the employee to notify the investigator that he/she is a member of a union/collective bargaining unit. In addition, it is the responsibility of the union/collective bargaining employee to exercise any contractual rights once they are made aware of the investigation. The revised policy also puts in writing that the investigator will be responsible for reviewing the applicable union contracts to ensure the affected employee’s rights are being observed. This was the normal practice, but now
it is in writing. The issue was discovered Thursday afternoon. The directive was changed that same afternoon and was disseminated to all DCF IG employees the next morning. By the following Monday all employees had acknowledged and signed for the revised directive and Accreditation Assistant Jennifer Guillermo had forwarded proof of the signatures to the team leader.

H. Waiver Concurrence/Nonconcurrence Discussion and Recommendation: None.

I. Standards Verified by the Team as “Not Applicable” to the Agency:
   1.08 (Assessor: RAW) 3.04 (Assessor: RAW)

J. Standards, the Status of Which, Were Changed by Assessors: None.

K. Public Information Activities:
   K-1. Correspondence and Media Interest:
      K-1-A. Correspondence:
      In response to the detailed public notification release made by the OIG, two emails were received by CFA staff and forwarded to the team leader for examination and inclusion into the assessment report.

      The first email was from Kendall Beres, an Analyst in the Contract Oversight Unit of DCF. His email addressed recruitment and hiring practices of the OIG for DCF. He was highly complimentary of the dedication and thoroughness of the recruitment and hiring process. He also stated it has been his experience that the professionalism he witnessed during the hiring process permeates the rest of the OIG’s personnel and operations.

      The second email was from Carie Carbo, a terminated Food Stamps employee. This email was mainly a complaint that her former office managers and coworkers in the Port St. Lucie office treated her unfairly. She alleges her managers and coworkers were racially biased against her Cuban heritage. The email does state that Ms. Carbo filed a complaint with the OIG about her perceived unfair termination. IG Steckler addressed the issue when it came up five years ago. Ms. Carbo was not and is not satisfied with the results. A review of the incident, even though the incident occurred long before the accreditation cycle, revealed nothing that conflicts with either the OIG’s policies or CFA’s Inspectors General Standards.

      K-1-B. Media Interest: None.

      K-2. Follow-up By Assessment Team: None.

L. Exemplary Policies/Projects/Procedures: None.

M. Quality of Service:
   Chapter 1: ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNING PRINCIPLES (Assigned Assessor: RAW)
The Office of Inspector General has established an investigative unit that has the authority and responsibility to carry out the investigative duties and responsibilities to initiate, conduct, supervise, and coordinate investigations designed to detect, deter, prevent, and eradicate fraud, waste, mismanagement, misconduct, and other abuses in state government.

The mission statement of the Department of Children & Families Office of Inspector General, Investigative Unit, is: Enhancing Public Trust in Government. In addition to being posted in all the offices, the OIG mission statement was also installed as the desktop background on each of the investigators’ computers. In order to meet that mission, each investigative staff member signs an acknowledgement of receipt attesting to receiving the Mission Statement/Core Values. Also, each investigative staff member completes an annual attestation of independence from impairments. OIG investigative staff members will be free from personal, organizational, and external impairments to independence in the performance of their duties and responsibilities.

The written directive system is exceptional. The directives are clear and succinct allowing employees to quickly and easily find appropriate guidance. The team witnessed the distribution and acknowledgement of directives as a result of a minor directive change made during the assessment. The process is transparent and efficient. Proof was provided to the team within two business days that all employees had received the directive update.

Chapter 2: PERSONNEL PRACTICES (Assigned Assessor: RAW)

Prior to offer of employment, the selected applicant for any Office of Inspector General regional investigator/supervisor position must provide proof of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. The Chief of Investigations or Regional Supervisor ensures the investigative team has the familiarity with the agency program, prior investigative experience in the subject area, training in the subject matter, educational background in subject area, preliminary research of program area and/or any specialized skills needed to successfully complete assigned tasks.

Each investigative staff member assigned to the Office of Inspector General is evaluated, at a minimum, annually by her or his immediate supervisor. Then the evaluation is reviewed by the Chief of Investigations and Inspector General prior to discussing it with the employee. After the immediate supervisor has reviewed and discussed the annual performance evaluation with the investigative staff member, the investigative staff member must sign the completed evaluation form to acknowledge participation in the evaluation process. The Inspector General initials all Office of Inspector General investigative staff members’ performance evaluations. The evaluations are forwarded to the agency’s personnel office for inclusion in the personnel files.

Chapter 3: TRAINING (Assigned Assessor: RAW)

Newly appointed investigators and newly appointed investigative support staff receive the orientation listed on the New Member Training and Orientation Checklist. This training is completed within six months of the hire date.
Investigators are encouraged to obtain appropriate professional certifications and continue their education in order to maintain their proficiency. They are encouraged to keep informed about improvements and current developments in investigative standards, procedures, and techniques. Continuing education may be obtained through membership and participation in professional societies, attendance of conferences, seminars, college courses, in-house training programs, and participation in research projects. Policy requires a minimum of 40 hours every two years with 12 hours of the training pertaining directly to their primary responsibilities.

Chapter 4: INVESTIGATION PROCESS (Assigned Assessor: DC)

The Department of Children and Families Office of Inspector General has an excellent Investigations and Complaint Management System. The web-based system allows intake and investigative staff throughout the state to immediately determine the status or disposition of all correspondence, complaints and investigations. All complaints received are assigned a tracking number and assessed by intake staff for appropriate action to include referral to management for handling, referral to the Investigations unit, or referral to a more appropriate agency.

The Office’s policies relating to intake and investigations include timeframes to ensure timely completion of all intake and investigative steps. Operations and Management Consultant Manager Evangeline Rentz, whose primary responsibility is the intake of all complaints, demonstrated the intake process both verbally and electronically. The Office of Inspector General has detailed procedures for conducting written plans of investigation, conducting interviews, and documenting supporting materials received during the course of an investigation.

Chief of Investigations Keith Parks confirmed his familiarity with investigative directives and procedures and his ability to manage his staffs’ investigative progress through supervisory oversight via the case management system. Inspector General Sheryl Steckler demonstrated how she reviews and approves all investigations electronically, not only by documenting her review with initials and dates, but by uploading her exact comments on every investigative report directly into the system.

One of the most impressive features of the Office of Inspector General Investigations and Complaint Management System is that their directives and procedures for Inspector General Investigative Standards have been incorporated directly into the system, providing intake and investigative staff with an ability to ensure compliance with procedures on a daily basis.

An issue surfaced during the assessment concerning evidence and, more importantly, those items that may become evidence. At the main office and all three field offices it was discovered that the facilities for the storage of evidence and possible evidence were less secure than what would be utilized in a traditional law enforcement agency. This is not to say the agency was out of compliance with the applicable standards. The OIG for DCF seldom takes evidence into custody. In most instances where it is obvious that a crime has occurred the OIG contacts the Florida Department of Law Enforcement or the local law enforcement agency and then the law enforcement agency deals with the evidence. The OIG has areas in all their offices where small amounts of evidence can be secured if needed. In most cases this evidence is administrative in
nature and not criminal. It is possible, however, for items used as proof in an administrative case to become evidence in the future. If that were to happen the evidence is turned over to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Chapter 5: WHISTLE-BLOWER'S ACT (Assigned Assessor: DC)

The Department of Children and Families Office of Inspector General has comprehensive and well-written procedures for governing their review of all complaints that might merit consideration in accordance with Sections 112.3187 – 112.31895, Florida Statutes, also known as the “Whistle-Blower’s Act”. The procedures outline the assessment and review steps, along with their associated timeframes for making proper determinations for adherence to this statute. Procedures also clearly describe the confidentiality provisions associated with Whistle-Blower investigations and the proper release of investigative reports. The proofs within the associated file demonstrated compliance with the procedures.

Chapter 6: NOTIFICATION PROCESS (Assigned Assessor: DC)

The Department of Children and Families Office of Inspector General has thorough procedures that address the appropriate steps to take to ensure that Entities Contracting with the State and Individuals Substantially Affected are provided with required notifications and an opportunity to respond to investigative reports as required in statute. The Office of Inspector General also developed a written checklist to ensure further accountability that these steps are completed.

Chapter 7: CASE MANAGEMENT (Assigned Assessor: RAW)

The Complaint Management System utilized by the OIG is highly effective. It is an electronic, cataloging investigations system that allows tracking of all investigations and ensures records, data and project related information are properly captured, preserved and are readily retrievable as needed. The Office of Inspector General tracks all correspondence, investigations and public records in the Investigations and Complaint Management System. A demonstration of this system was provided and it was impressive. Not only was everything tracked as required by standards and indicated by policy, but who made the entry and when the entry was made is also tracked. This system is a model of efficiency and simplicity.

All case related documents are organized as described in the case closing checklist both in the Investigations and Complaint Management System and the hard case file. The Regional Investigator, Regional Investigator Supervisor and the Chief of Investigations indicate that the Investigations and Complaint Management System and the hard case file contain all required materials arranged properly by initialing the checklist prior to closing the investigation. The checklist accompanies the closing memorandum submitted to the Chief of Investigations and the Inspector General. The checklist is retained on page two of the investigative hard case file.

The Investigations and Complaint Management System maintains information about the complaint and the findings of the investigation. The Investigations and Complaint Management System also contains all case related documents, including draft and final versions of the investigative report, governing directives, witness and subject Memorandums of Interview, sworn statements, Memorandums of Record Review, all documentary evidence, supervisory reviews,
and other case related documents. All documents are uploaded into the Investigations and Complaint Management System by investigative staff. As a result, the hard case file contains only pertinent original documentary evidence such as sworn statements and original handwritten interview notes.

The hard case files are maintained in a secured area in an organized manner allowing for easy retrieval when necessary.

Chapter 8: FINAL REPORTING PROCESSES (Assigned Assessor: RAW)

Final reports have a cover memo and are released by removing the draft watermark in preparation of the final investigative report. The investigative report is prepared in PDF format and distributed according to a distribution list located in the investigative packet. The list is completed by the investigator and confirmed by the Chief of Investigations.

Investigative reports are redacted for public purpose and placed on the Office of Inspector General website within two weeks of release date. Exceptions to placing the final report on the website are documented.

Post investigative responses to final investigative reports from any source are scanned into the Investigations and Complaint Management System and addressed to include at least a documented review of issues raised and response documentation, if appropriate.

N. Summary and Recommendation:

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS: The Department of Children and Families Office of Inspector General is a modern, well trained, and enthusiastic unit. This office has embraced their responsibilities to the citizens of Florida in a genuine fashion. Everything they do, including seeking accreditation, is done to further the public’s trust in government.

The accreditation process for an Office of Inspector General is new in the country. Using hindsight, it seems abundantly clear that IG offices should practice what they preach. That is, IG offices should be subjected to a similar type of independent peer review that they themselves provide. A governmental agency that strives to instill trust in the public it serves and holds transparency as a fundamental tenet should subject itself to the open scrutiny and review the accreditation process provides. This agency did a tremendous job with a totally new process. The effort and dedication put into the accreditation process should set an example for all Inspector General offices seeking accreditation.

The assessment team highly recommends the Department of Children and Families Office of Inspector General be considered for accredited status.

Signed: 

[Signature on file]

Robert A. Wagner – Team Leader